

## CHAPTER 4

**GOOD DRIVING PRACTICES**

Fifty years ago, when there were few vehicles and roads were narrow, there were two simple traffic rules. One required a driver to turn to the right when meeting a vehicle coming from the opposite direction. The other required him to turn to the left when overtaking and passing a vehicle going in the same direction. At other times, a driver could use the center or any other part of the road. It is easy to imagine the confusion and wreckage that would result if these were the only rules followed today.

**OBEYING THE RULES OF THE ROAD**

Rules of the road are standardized throughout the United States to promote highway safety. However, they may be modified by local laws and ordinances or by appropriate civil or military authority. Such modifications will be normally indicated by traffic control personnel or by signs or markings. Drivers will be informed of applicable rules and variations when operating outside the continental United States.

The following are the general rules of the road for military and civilian drivers:

- Operate vehicles on the right of the highway, giving approaching traffic at least one-half of the road unless conditions or directions indicate otherwise. When overtaking and passing other vehicles, pass to the left and remain on the left until safely clear of the overtaken vehicle. However, **DO NOT** overtake and pass another vehicle unless the left side of the road is clearly visible and free of oncoming traffic. Ensure that you have sufficient distance to pass and safely return to the right without coming within 100 feet of an approaching vehicle. You may pass on the right when the vehicle you are passing has signaled and is making a left turn. Be cautious because the vehicle may block your view and another driver's view of you. You may also pass on the right if you are on a street or highway designed for two or more lanes of traffic in both directions or on a one-way street with at least two lanes. Under such conditions, keep movement from one lane to another to the minimum. If you must change lanes, signal your intentions, and then ensure that such movement can be made safely and does not interfere with the movement of traffic in other lanes. You may not pass on the right if you must drive off the pavement or the main portion of the roadway to get around another vehicle.
- **DO NOT** start, stop, or turn a vehicle from its course on the highway without ensuring that making such a change is reasonably safe. Also, give adequate warning of your intentions. Make a visual survey of the traffic that may be affected by the movement of your vehicle. You must know how to judge the speed of oncoming vehicles and the effect of your movement upon either their speed or direction. Give clear warning signals that are standard, appropriate to your intentions, and timed to give reasonable warning. A proper signal of intention to turn right or left will be given continuously during not less than the last 100 feet traveled by the vehicle before turning. To turn right at an intersection, approach the turn at the extreme right of the traveled way and make the turn itself as close to the right as practicable. To turn left, approach the turn to the right of, and close to, the centerline, leaving the intersection to the right of the centerline of the entered road. An exception is a one-way road which will be entered to the left of the centerline. A turn to reverse the direction of a vehicle will not be made unless a vehicle approaching from either direction can see the movement from a distance of 500 feet.
- Observe the rules of right-of-way with judgment and courtesy. The safe driver gives the right-of-way rather than taking it. In general, when two vehicles enter an intersection at about the same time, the vehicle on the left yields the right-of-way to the vehicle on the right. Always yield right-of-way to the first vehicle arriving at an intersection. When entering a through highway from a secondary road, give the right-of-way to traffic on the main thoroughfare. Fire, police,

and emergency vehicles have the right-of-way over all other vehicles. However, military emergency vehicles are required to be operated with due regard for life, property, and traffic laws. Obey directions given by traffic control personnel or signs regardless of conflict with the general rules quoted.

Highway speeds to be observed under normal conditions vary somewhat from state to state. These speeds are generally posted on regulatory signs with warnings where reduction in speed is directed. Safe highway speeds are determined by analysis of traffic, highway design, and population densities. Posted speed indicates the results of such analysis under conditions of average traffic, dry pavement, and good visibility. At no time should vehicles be operated in excess of posted limits. Driver judgment should be consciously developed to determine speeds suitable to other conditions. Safe driving requires constant adjustment to changing driving conditions. The military driver will be trained to judge and maintain safe following distances to ensure adequate reaction time and stopping distances at any speed and under varying conditions.

## DRIVING ON THE RIGHT

On two-lane roads, the law requires you to drive on the right-hand side of the road, not only when meeting another vehicle, but also as a general rule. Driving on the left-hand side of the road is permitted only in certain situations, such as passing. The danger of ignoring this law is obvious. Yet, more than one-seventh of fatal accidents are the result of head-on and sideswipe collisions, the kind that occur because a driver is on the wrong side of the road. Driving with a portion of your vehicle on the wrong side is a violation of this law.

Why do people drive on the wrong side of the road? One reason is speed. When a person is driving fast, he wants to be sure that he has plenty of room. Because he senses the danger of running off the side of the road, he instinctively moves toward the center. In avoiding one danger, the driver exposes himself to another. A second reason people drive on the wrong side of the road is that they fail to concentrate on driving. Their minds are occupied with conversation, with settling a quarrel, worrying, or trying to remember detailed instructions given by

their supervisors – everything except driving. Their eyes may be off the road and on a passenger in the back seat. The military vehicle driver will refrain from unnecessary conversation while driving. When you are driving, give all your attention to it.

## HANDLING CURVES

When thinking of vehicle accidents, people are likely to think of one vehicle crashing into another. Thousands of people are killed each year in collisions between vehicles, but more are killed in one-vehicle accidents. A driver loses control of his vehicle, skids off the road and careens into a telephone pole, or his vehicle turns over and over as it rolls down an embankment into a ditch. A curve is a likely place for this kind of accident.

If you took physics in school you learned two rules about moving bodies:

- Moving bodies tend to remain in motion.
- Moving bodies tend to follow a straight path.

To make a moving body follow a curved path, you have to use force to overcome its natural tendency to follow a straight one. A vehicle on a curve is a moving body with a natural tendency to go straight ahead. At each point on the curve the driver must use force to keep the vehicle turning. The natural tendency to go straight ahead increases much more rapidly than the speed. At 60 MPH, it takes nine times as much force to keep a vehicle turning as it does at 20 MPH.

More important, effective steering depends on the traction between the road and the tires. Traction refers to the tendency of the rubber of the tire to stick to the road instead of slipping and sliding over it. The part of a tire in contact with the road at any one time is about the size of the sole of a shoe. Four small patches of rubber are the only connection between the road and the vehicle.

Anyone who has ever been in a skid knows that traction can be broken. Whenever the tendency of the vehicle to travel in a straight line becomes too powerful for the traction holding the vehicle on the curve, the tires slide on the road and the vehicle starts to skid.

The force represented by the natural tendency of the vehicle to follow a straight line is opposed by the force you place on the steering wheel to turn the vehicle. These opposing forces can cause you to lose control of the vehicle. The only thing you can do to prevent skidding is to drive slowly enough to make the curve safely. (Chapter 9 discusses what to do if you go into a skid.)

When driving on a curve, do the following:

- As you approach a curve, slow down enough so that after you are in the curve, you can keep your engine pulling and maintain your speed.
- Do not wait until you are in the curve to apply your brakes.
- If you must apply your brakes in a curve, be careful. Use a gentle pumping motion until you are sure it is safe to keep continuous pressure on the pedal.
- Start turning your wheels just before you reach the point at which the road begins to turn.
- Once in a curve, stay on your own side of the road and stay as far over as you reasonably can. Do not try to make a curve easier by cutting across the lane of oncoming traffic.
- Maintain a moderate speed and the curve will be easy enough to handle on your side of the road.

You cannot judge the next curve by the last one. Roads with uniformly sharp or gentle curves are probably safer than roads with curves of varying degrees. But on most roads, curves vary a good deal. Assume that unfamiliar curves are sharp. You can always speed up if you are wrong, but you may not always be able to slow down.

## USING SELECTIVE VISION

Safe drivers must know what is going on at all times around their vehicle. Not looking properly is a major cause of accidents. All drivers look ahead, but many do not look far enough ahead. Stopping or changing lanes can take a lot of distance; so you must know what the traffic is doing on all sides of

you. You must look far ahead to be sure you have room to move safely.

Most good drivers look 12 to 15 seconds ahead. That means looking ahead the distance you will travel in 12 to 15 seconds. At lower speeds, that is about one block; at highway speeds, about a quarter of a mile. If you do not look that far ahead, you may have to stop too quickly or change lanes quickly. Looking 12 to 15 seconds ahead does not mean not paying attention to closer things. Good drivers shift their attention back and forth, near and far.

Look for vehicles coming onto the highway, into your lane, or turning. Watch for brake lights from slow moving vehicles. By seeing these things far enough ahead, you can change your speed or change lanes if necessary to avoid a problem. Look for hills, curves, or anything for which you must slowdown or change lanes. Pay attention to traffic signals and signs. If a light has been green for a long time, it will probably change before you get there. Start slowing down and be ready to stop. Traffic signs may alert you to road conditions where you may have to change speed.

## TURNING LEFT

Sometimes when you are making a left turn at an intersection, your vision of traffic coming from the right will be obstructed by a passenger sitting beside you on the front seat. If your vehicle is equipped with individual bucket seats, adjusting the passenger seat several inches backward of the driver's seat will give you a better view to the right. If the vehicle has a standard seat, you may have to lean forward to see around your passenger. If necessary, ask him to lean back to give you a better view.

Be sure there is enough space to turn left. When turning left –

- Signal your intent to turn and slow down.
- If there are two left turn lanes, take the right-hand turn lane.
- Be sure you are in the center of the intersection. Start to turn only after you are sure your vehicle's rear will clear the centerline.

- Be sure there is an adequate gap to turn in front of traffic.
- Watch your vehicle's progress in the side mirrors.
- Steer the vehicle wide of the lane, if necessary.
- When the vehicle's wheels are into the lane, steer left to put the vehicle in the lane and straighten up.
- If applicable, watch for oncoming traffic.
- Cancel your signal.

## **TURNING RIGHT**

Before making any turns, signal your intention at least 100 feet ahead of the intersection. When making a right turn -

- Be sure there is enough space to turn right.
- Signal your intent to turn and slow down gradually as you approach the turn.
- Be sure to let oncoming traffic clear before you make your turn.
- Stay as close as possible to the right edge of the road or street.
- Never swerve to the left before turning right.
- Position your vehicle in the right-hand lane. Keep your vehicle's rear close to the curb. Do not turn wide to the left as you start the turn; the driver behind you might think you are turning left.
- Pull forward into the intersection past the right corner; you must do this so the vehicle's rear wheels can clear the curb. Turn the steering wheel hard to the right.
- Check your vehicle's progress using the right side mirrors.
- Watch oncoming cars if swinging wide into the left or oncoming lane.
- Cancel your signal.

If the speed is right the turn should be easily made without swerving. If your tires squeal when you turn, it is likely that you are trying to take the turn too fast.

## **ABSTAINING FROM ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS**

Drinking is a factor in at least half of the fatal motor vehicle accidents in the United States. Most of the people involved in these accidents did not have enough to drink to be considered drunk, but there is reason to believe that the driver who has had a drink or two may be more dangerous than the one who is clearly drunk. He usually does not realize that his driving ability is impaired. He often thinks he can drive better. "Whiskey courage" is an old story. On the highway, it is a tragic one.

Alcohol is not the only drug that impairs driving ability. Barbiturates, antihistamines, and other medicines in common use may cause drowsiness. If you are uncertain about the effects of a particular medicine, check with your doctor or druggist before taking it. If he says that it may make you sleepy, do not take it before driving. You must stay alert to stay alive.

Narcotics may dull the senses, induce profound sleep, or cause stupor, coma, or convulsions. Effects on the central nervous system include hilarity, carelessness, talkativeness, euphoria, distortion of sensation and perception, impairment of judgment and memory, distortion of emotional responsiveness, irritability, and confusion. You cannot take drugs and operate your vehicle safely.

## **RESTING**

If you have experienced loss of sleep or for some other reason feel an unusual sleepiness to the point that you think your driving may be unsafe, notify your supervisor. He will adjust your duties accordingly. This does not excuse you from keeping yourself physically capable of performing your duty, and repeated incidents will require a physical checkup and/or disciplinary action.

For Army Only: Drivers will not be assigned to drive military vehicles for more than 10 continuous hours. They will not have a combined duty period (driving plus other duties) longer than 12 hours in

any 24-hour period without at least 8 consecutive hours of rest (AR 385-55).